INTRODUCTION

The American Promised Land! Rarely has a concept in modern Europe contained as great an admixture of myth and reality or provoked more tangled responses. It has filled some men with great hope; others it has led into blind alleys of misunderstanding; still others (and the number is not small) it has plunged into deep abysses of bitter disillusionment. Columbus had only to tell Isabella about his blundering discovery, and Europeans began arguing and rearguing the meaning of the New World.

Europeans have too frequently clouded their debate about America with fantastic inventions which prevented realistic appraisals of this country. The Spanish conquistadors who rode off in search of the fabulous cities established a pattern of laxity, and Europeans ever since, forgetting how that trek petered out in the dusty plains above Texas, have not been very careful about getting their facts straight. On the occasions when they turned their attention toward the United States, they usually were motivated by events close to home. More than once a heated dialogue about America was merely a roundabout way for Europeans to talk about local problems when circumstances prohibited free and open discussion. America was important, but not necessarily for its own sake. Because the image of this country had important polemical uses, Europeans called upon it selectively and did not characteristically make accuracy their only, or even their primary, concern.

Yet if few of the participants in this continuing exchange have over the years penetrated (or cared to penetrate) as deeply into American realities as Tocqueville and Bryce, they have never failed

in their arguments to reveal a great deal about themselves. After all, the colonization and expansion of the trans-Atlantic republic had serious implications for Europe's future and, for many, raised questions no less important than God's ultimate cosmic scheme. In such disputes, men of the Old World did not choose sides lightheartedly or dispassionately; and while America never dominated the European consciousness, Europeans of all classes gathered fixed ideas about the New World which they were prepared to defend upon a moment's notice.

While specific issues have not stayed the same, the general outline of the debate has been clear from the initial European exploration of this continent. One faction has for various reasons always looked upon the discovery of America as regrettable. From venereal disease and tobacco to Coca-Cola, so these prophets of gloom have insisted, the New World has subjected Europe to a steady flow of debilitating influences. The Comte de Buffon and the Abbé Raynal, two ubiquitous children of the French Enlightenment, set the tone for this side even before the French Revolution. A damper air and a marshier ground on the new continent, they said, had both unbearded and unsexed the native male population. Europeans wandering into the American wilderness might not immediately face similar emasculation, but sturdy adventurers to these shores presumably ran some risk of waking one morning to find milk in their breasts. Rationalist to the core, the Comte and the Abbé were suspicious of the disorder and intellectual carelessness fostered in a primitive setting, and so far as they were concerned Europeans were better off if they stayed home.

Those belonging to the opposing faction have at all times shown equal dedication in picturing the United States as Europe's last and best hope for redemption. They too could trace their ancestry to eighteenth-century Frenchmen. Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecœur, a worthy cultivator of a patch of this "garden paradise," saw a new man arising here who would finally realize humanity's grandest dreams. The labors of the American would, in Crèvecœur's words, "one day cause great changes in the world." The Marquis de Condorcet, reflecting the shift in the opinion of many French philosophes after the events of 1776, agreed. "It is not enough," he wrote in his great *Sketch of an Historical Pageant of the Progress*

of the Human Mind, "that the rights of men be written in the tomes of philosophers and in the hearts of virtuous men. The weak and the ignorant must be able to read them in the example of a great nation. America has given us that example."

The American Revolution and the association of the United States with radical democracy set the framework for the debate in the nineteenth century. A man's politics usually determined whether he stood with the defenders or the detractors of the United States. The heirs of Burke and Maistre regarded the influence of American egalitarianism on Europe's hierarchical social structure with increasing alarm. In their minds American manners were vulgar, ideals shabby, and politics corrupt beyond imagination. The notion of malleable men and institutions promulgated by New World enthusiasts tempted men to meddle disastrously with the social order and undermined the grounds for decent collective human behavior.

Political liberals and social radicals, on the other hand, generally sided with those turning hopeful eyes to America. To members of the European left the United States enshrined goodness, opportunity, prosperity, and equality and gave men a reason to believe in a better future. They were not uncritical of life here. Slavery badly tarnished America's image before the Civil War, and after emancipation Tammany Hall and Standard Oil arose to keep European liberals uneasy. Nevertheless, these men, who were working to alter the established ways of Europe, found much to admire in American life. American institutions, especially American political institutions, offered important guides for Europe out of its own social disorders. Whatever its flaws, America was the freest and most blessed republic yet in operation.

This neat lineup of European political opinion was disrupted from time to time in the nineteenth century, but only Marxist intrusions after 1880 finally shattered it. For the first time a group of European radicals refused to accept any belief in America's redemptive powers. Indeed, a number of Marxists placed a surprisingly high priority on disassociating themselves from the traditional admiration of the United States shared by other parties of the European left. For if "Americanism" were accepted as a surrogate for militant Marxism, then the Marxists' own special program for world revolution would be a dead letter. Marxist stalwarts might just as

well emigrate (as many, so it was sadly noted, did) or join with those working to remodel Europe according to American specifications. If there existed anywhere a bourgeois republic whose free enterprise system did not disrupt social harmony and equality, Marxism had a severe theoretical problem. European liberals knew this, which was one reason their praise for the United States sometimes so clearly outdistanced common sense.

Thus when European Marxists looked at America, they made a great leap across the political spectrum to link hands with members of the European right in insisting that America offered no alternatives to life in Europe. Following the lead of the United States' severest critics, they ridiculed the notions that regeneration might be accomplished by the simple expedient of physical relocation and that European class struggles would terminate with the duplication of American ways. Compared with Marxist attacks on alleged Yankee virtues, the estimates of the many critics who had gone before looked generous.

As this investigation seeks to show, some prominent European Marxists did present their own revised versions of an American Promised Land. But they first specifically repudiated the "old" promise of America which liberals had founded upon the differences between the New World and the Old. The American Canaan of the Marxists was premised instead upon a New World which had grown decadent and corrupt. By entwining the most pointed criticism of American life advanced by European conservatives with their own dialectical process of history, Marxists could visualize a sudden inversion of the American capitalist inferno into a socialist paradise.

Except for Chapter 7 and a brief backward glance in Chapter 1 the study falls within the years from 1880 to 1917. In 1880 European socialism was struggling to make a comeback from the damaging setbacks of the 1870's. That decade had begun with the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the effective demise of the First International in 1872 with the removal of the headquarters to New York City (a formal death certificate was not issued until 1876). It had ended with Bismarck's declaration in 1878 of his Anti-Socialist Laws which attempted (as it turned out, unsuccessfully) to destroy the strong socialist party fused in 1875 by August Bebel

and Wilhelm Liebknecht out of several disparate radicalisms. Almost everywhere in Europe in those years, trade unionists had felt the sting of bourgeois reaction and had suffered under new legislative obstacles or hastily revived old ones. In England, the one country in which both political and economic conditions seemed to favor a strong drive by workers and socialists, the industrial proletariat had shown a puzzling indifference to revolution. All this, combined with the lingering attraction of workers to anarchism and unscientific socialism, had made the 1870's discouraging years for those who championed Marx as the leading prophet of a great world movement.

By 1880 there was reason to believe that the reaction had done its worst. Marx himself, beyond his great work of *Capital* and approaching death, could look with guarded hope on what was happening around him. After many years of relative obscurity he was now eclipsing the reputations of Saint-Simon, Proudhon, Lassalle, Bakunin, and more recently Eugen Dühring. His disciples, though often self-proclaimed and disliked by Marx, spent the 1880's busily establishing Social Democratic parties across Europe. Liebknecht and Bebel in Germany had already indicated in the previous decade how mighty an influence socialism could exert when wedded to labor causes, and aided by such brilliant theorists as Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky they went on in the 1880's to purge their party of remaining Lassallean elements and embarrass the great Bismarck by making a shambles out of his legislation against them. Pablo Iglesias established a Spanish Social Democratic party in 1879. Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue formed *le Parti ouvrier* in France in 1882. In England, Marxists came to life with the creation of H. M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation and, a few years later, the Socialist League of William Morris and Edward Aveling. By 1883 the Russians G. V. Plekhanov and P. B. Axelrod had founded, while in exile, the Group of the Liberation of Labor. A Norwegian Social Democratic party followed in 1887, one in Austria and one in Switzerland in 1888, and one in Sweden in 1889. The progress was exhilarating, and in 1889 European socialists looked optimistically across national frontiers and flexed their collective muscle to launch the Second International.

In 1890, Marxists had not succeeded in eliminating other socialists

from the field of radical activity. In Italy, Spain, Belgium, and Holland the situation was confused, and doctrines ranging from anarchism to moderate trade unionism were stronger drawing cards to labor than Marxism. Even in the countries mentioned in the preceding paragraph, most notably England, Marxists had very strong rivals. Revisionism, the doctrine which challenged the fatalistic implications of Marxists' millennial vision and offered a more tempered critique of the internal flaws of capitalism, was not the sudden invention of Eduard Bernstein in 1899. The earlier activities of English Fabians and French *possibilistes* attest to that. But, it is the Marxists who first attract the eye of one who looks back on this period. (In fact, for reasons which will become apparent, Marxist socialists are the principal focus of this study.) Marx was known at least secondhand to everyone, and rhetorical clichés of the Marxist movement infiltrated the European socialist press, whatever the nominal stance of a particular journal. The spirited confidence of the Marxists was infectious, and in the late 1880's and early 1890's they rested comfortably and more or less uncompromisingly in their revolutionary assumptions. They sensed the beginning of a great change, and time had not yet stretched thin their belief that with tomorrow came the deluge. A more cautious and a more practical mood always existed among Marxist leaders, and paradoxically after 1890 it would grow stronger with every success at the ballot box. Marxists talked in more radical ways than they behaved, and their activity tied them more and more to a legal, parliamentary course. Yet, strengthened by the trials of the 1870's and emboldened but not yet mellowed by progress in the 1880's, Marxists in 1890 felt themselves riding easily on the wave of the future. Until 1917 they constituted the majority of the policy makers of the German Social Democratic party which in turn tended to dominate the councils of the Second International.

Marx, who had predicted the new burst of activity set off in the 1880's, was the first to link the improved fortunes of European socialism with developments in the United States. Goaded by the explosive advance of American capitalism after the Civil War, Marx began around 1880 to define a "new" promise for America—a promise which guaranteed a swift end to the impatient waiting of European revolutionaries (Chapter 1). He died in 1883, but through

Engels his enthusiastic interest in the American continent was passed on to his disciples in Europe. Important European Marxists first made sure that they had cut the ground out from under earlier versions of American promise (Chapter 2), and then went on to fill in their own hopes for a socialist America (Chapter 3). Formulations of the latter view, though begun in the 1880's, were most popular in the decade from 1895 to 1905 and drew for inspiration on the American trust phenomenon (Chapter 4). After 1905, Marxist pronouncements about any kind of American Promised Land, whether old or new style, underwent an erratic but steady decline. Events in the United States posed questions which European Marxists found more and more difficult to answer (Chapter 5), and revisionist socialists, especially after 1900, challenged Marxists with second looks at the "old" promise of America (Chapter 6). By 1917 the United States had become a large stumbling block for the many Marxist theorists who still believed in economic determinism, and following the Russian Revolution their hopes for a strong capitalist America changed into fear and disgust. A detailed study of changed socialist attitudes toward the United States in the post-World War I era would entail consideration of the enormously altered political situation in the world as well as the complicated reorientation in Marxist thought. It is not a study I have undertaken. A look at the opinions about America expressed by Lenin and Trotsky, however, suggests some of the new currents and conflicts in European socialist reactions to this country after the formation of the Third International (Chapter 7).

European Marxists who today are watching the simultaneous growth of America's "affluent society" and the Americanization of Europe are the heirs of the disappointment and frustration first felt by their predecessors in the pre-World War I period. But, at the same time, Americans are left to wonder whether the uniqueness of their country, once an unmitigated blessing and an inspiration to rising people everywhere, is now their greatest handicap in trying to capture the imagination of the world.

An author cannot expect to disarm all criticism by giving forewarning of difficulties in his study. Nevertheless, an initial reference

to certain troublesome matters is due the reader. In the first place, an inevitable distortion results from selecting material to organize according to a specific theme. When a multitude of European socialist comments about the United States is picked out from here and there and placed together in one volume, the reader is easily misled into thinking that the United States was the overriding intellectual concern of the men and women who comprised the Second International. As indicated earlier, the vision of Europeans, socialist and non-socialist alike, tended to become singularly myopic when directed toward the United States, and the attention of the observers was easily diverted. They explored American perspectives enthusiastically but selectively for brief periods, and then abruptly turned away. If one were to rank countries by the number of times they were referred to in the European socialist press, the United States would fall far down the list. Socialist chroniclers of the American scene passed over events which seemingly should have aroused their liveliest interest. Many of the most important labor disputes, great movements like Populism, and vast social problems like discrimination against black Americans were almost totally ignored. Algie M. Simons, reflecting on the strong nationalistic tendencies of European socialists, lamented that the United States delegates to the 1907 International Socialist Convention in Stuttgart were treated more as guests than as members.* Simons might have added in fairness that the European habit of looking first at what was closest to home was constantly reinforced by the disappointing realities of socialist progress in America.

The American theme was hardly central to the major concerns of the Second International, but it did not, on the other hand, constitute an unimportant footnote. The United States, because of its particular qualities and the uniqueness of the myth surrounding it, formed a significant subject to which many socialist leaders addressed themselves again and again. An impressive number took the trouble to come here. My tracing of the interesting patterns of socialist opinion about the United States is not intended to add worlds to our knowledge of the Second International. It does offer,

* Letter of A. M. Simons to Gaylord Wilshire, *Wilshire's Magazine*, XI (Oct. 1907), 3, quoted in Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897–1912* (New York, 1952), 244.

I think, some revealing insights into the intellectual habits we have long recognized as characteristic of the men and women who in those days sought to revolutionize the world. Moreover the reader should remember that this is part of a larger story of how Europeans have looked at America, how they have used it and misused it, how they have understood it and misunderstood it. On its most general level, this is simply another tale which seeks to say something about how men have tried to adjust their ideals to the realities of a distressingly non-pliant world.

A related warning must be given about the degree of importance belonging to various stray pieces of Marxist polemics. To carry out this study, I sifted through countless opinions about the United States. Many of these analyses were ambiguous or contradictory; some were obviously disingenuous. How much significance and what kind of significance can one assign to such comments? The same problem besets all studies about foreign attitudes toward the United States. When was the United States merely being used as a convenient but extraneous sounding board to amplify previously held convictions? When, in calling the United States the likely site of the first socialist victory, was a European socialist leader venting a profoundly held conviction, and when was he merely genuflecting to conventional and easily rattled-off wisdom? When, in speaking of troubling dilemmas posed by developments in America, was a European Marxist more than momentarily taking his eyes off problems closer to home? To ask these questions is not to suggest that the bulk of the references appearing in the socialist press are without significance. Quite the contrary. But the researcher must keep in mind his involvement with different kinds of expression, for, depending on the degree of seriousness he judges to be attached to an opinion, he can draw quite distinct conclusions.

Since several scholars who have read this manuscript have suggested that the dilemmas of Marxist thought touched on in this story were easily avoidable, I should say right now that nowhere am I concerned in the text with whether Karl Marx, properly read, furnishes an adequate background for understanding economic developments in the United States. My interests are more concrete. How did Marxists (who, as it is repeated again and again, often in the period from 1880 to 1917 misrepresented Marx to stress economic

determinism and never stopped talking, despite their behavior, about the imminence of revolution) and other European socialists manipulate the image of the United States? What questions did they ask, and what developments concerned them? What circumstances at home prompted their interest, and what circumstances quelled it? Why did they give such great coverage to an event like the Haymarket riot and write so little about the I.W.W.? How did they use information garnered on these shores in doctrinal disputes, and what effects, if any, did it have on theoretical and tactical considerations? Asking such questions and frequently paying attention to answers given in the socialist press does not always provide a view of socialist thought at its best and most sophisticated. Even Marx in writing about the United States could be found guilty of the romantic delusions he deplored in soberer moments. (Marxists are not Marx, but Marx and certainly Engels share partial blame for subsequent misunderstanding.) Nevertheless, the rhetoric is revealing about socialist expectations and divisions in the years around the turn of the century. If I sometimes criticize actual Marxist observations about this country, it is not necessarily because I think Marx's theories gave his followers no alternatives for better understanding. But Marxist doctrine, as then usually expressed, did make America a problem for many of the leading theorists of the Second International and offered revisionist socialists an easy line of assault on what, rightly or wrongly, had hardened into Marxist orthodoxy.

Decisions about the scope of research were obviously necessary before this study was ever begun (if for no other reasons than the lack of time, unavailability of material, and unfamiliarity with languages). While the title suggests a survey of all European countries, the work in fact concentrates almost entirely upon Germany, France, and England, and includes a chapter on Russia and occasional references to socialists in Belgium and the Netherlands. Of Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, or the countries of eastern Europe, there is not a word. Something, then, needs to be said about the reasons for the countries included as well as the reasons for the omissions.

Germany, France, and England, I think, would be anyone's first three choices in undertaking a study of this sort. Germany had by far the largest socialist movement in Europe and provided an im-

pressive amount of the intellectual leadership for the Second International. In addition, because of the heavy flow of German immigrants into this country and the German composition of the early American socialist movement, there was a high degree of communication between American and German socialist leaders. In fact, the reader will quickly discern, at least in Chapters 2–5, a preponderance of German illustrations. In part that reflects the genuine interest of many prominent German Marxists, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky, and August Bebel among them, in the events which took place here. In part, however, it simply reflects the distribution of the material. The German press was far wealthier than that in any other country, and it never stopped rolling. German Marxists said more about America than the French, for example, but then they said more on every question touching on general concerns. When one does any work on the Second International, one is stuck with the great importance of Germany.

France ranked second among the powerful Continental socialist movements, and, though far less tied to the United States by immigration, historical contacts as well as the admiration for American institutions expressed by many French republicans, made the United States an unavoidable subject for France's socialist writers. If the French people were and are more inwardly directed than most, they have nevertheless made some of the most important contributions to the European image of the New World.

The English socialist movement does not receive the attention it does in these pages primarily because of its strength. In fact its strength, especially on its Marxist side, never approached that of the German and French movements, lagged behind that of the Austrian and Italian, and was no more vigorous than that of the Belgian or Dutch. Rather, it was the close cultural ties between England and the United States which give England priority here. English socialists were the most keenly interested of all the national groups in what was going on in this country.

A separate question from whether England, Germany, and France are the most logical choices for inclusion is whether a wide enough net has been cast to justify the study's title. Actually, in the process of combing socialist literature for material about America, one reaches a point of rapidly diminishing returns. Instead of coming

across new ideas and insights, one keeps finding increasingly repetitious variations of already familiar themes. Much of the literature, as the reader will soon see, is framed polemically to persuade and encourage. Even the more scholarly socialist material about America tended to pose a very limited set of questions, and the answers, once stated, became standard fare in the socialist press. I have in fact surveyed the literature of Italy, Austria, and the Low Countries as well as the writings of the most important figures in the Second International; and, in my opinion, further perusal of newspapers and archival material in western Europe would not get sufficiently beyond the main outlines of this study to justify the effort. The stereotyped phrases that emerged in socialist discussions about America appear to have crossed national frontiers quite easily. Conceivably eastern Europe would suggest some different national patterns, but a treatment of that area lies beyond my competence.

The terms "socialist" and "Marxist" invariably cause confusion. Except for the various revisionist socialists dealt with in Chapter 6, the major figures in this study considered themselves Marxists. It has not seemed appropriate to this historian to dispute their own evaluations, and I have consistently called them and their journals Marxist. When I use the term "socialist" alone, my reference, while including Marxists, applies as well to a broader spectrum of opinion within the Second International. I have tried to include enough of the basic history of the Second International to make the theme understandable to the general reader.

This study grew out of research I was doing on the American Socialist party. I was struck particularly by the fact that American socialists at the turn of the century, by using a simplified version of the Marxist stage theory of history, had extraordinarily high expectations about their future. Wondering how American socialists could possibly have arrived at such inflated notions, I began researching the extent to which European socialists shared their sanguine hopes. This led to some further questions about how European socialists used America, and more generally how Europeans have always used America. In the final manuscript my research on the movement in the United States was pushed ungraciously and

somewhat awkwardly to the end. The issues raised there are important, however; and, since the reader should have no difficulty relating it to the rest, I have let the material stand.

I should finally alert my readers to a few miscellaneous matters concerning quotations in the text. The problem of how much and what to quote is never an easily soluble one. In most cases to put together long strings of quotations saying the same thing seemed needlessly repetitious. Many of the cited quotations could be replaced by a dozen others, and I have used those which best illustrated a point and which came from the most important sources. Voices of significant socialist leaders have always been given first place. In some cases, however, particularly with respect to statements predicting America's emergence as the first socialist commonwealth, I have been more willing to cite repetitive material. In these instances I have tried to find opportunities to use more exhaustively the comments uncovered in my research. For the convenience of the reader I have cited published translations of foreign material when possible; otherwise the translations are my own.